NWT PlainTalk
On Land and Self-government
December 2001

Salt River First Nation votes on settlement

"After years of negotiating, I am pleased to place this offer of a final settlement before our membership for their review and ultimately, a final decision," said Salt River First Nation Chief, Jim Schaefer.

Negotiators for Salt River First Nation (SRFN), Canada and the GNWT initialed a Final Treaty Land Entitlement settlement agreement in November. Salt River First Nation band members will be asked to vote on the settlement agreement on December 20 - 22, 2001.

The settlement agreement will become final if the majority of SRFN members of legal voting age turn out to vote, and vote in its favour. The agreement will also need to be signed by the Chief and Council of SRFN, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs for the GNWT, and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The settlement agreement seeks to provide a reserve land base for SRFN, and thus fulfil commitments made in Treaty 8, which was signed in 1899. The agreement proposes to set aside approximately 166 square miles of reserve lands at 16 sites in and around the Town of Fort Smith, and four sites in Wood Buffalo National Park.

Should Salt River First Nation band members vote in favour of the settlement agreement in December, a formal signing ceremony will likely take place early next spring.

Salt River First Nation Chief Jim Schaefer.
Photo: Sharon Clarke, DIAND

Moving forward on the Governance Initiative

President of the Native Women's Association of the NWT, Liza Charlo Pieper, sits with Jennie Turner, Acting Executive Director of the association at the Governance session during the Native Women's Assembly in October. Photo: Caroline Dennil/DIAND

The first phase of the *Communities First: First Nations Governance* initiative is now complete. The department is moving forward on the next phase of the process, together with First Nations partners, to analyse what was gathered from hundreds of information and consultation sessions across Canada.

Robert Nault, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), launched *Communities First* in April 2001. The purpose of the initiative is to discuss with First Nations leaders and individuals across Canada, ways of updating the *Indian Act* to strengthen First Nations governance and to give First Nations people greater control over how their communities are governed.

DIAND's regional team held information sessions in many communities throughout the Northwest Territories this summer and fall. Discussions were in the Sahtu, Gwich'in, Deh Cho, and Akaitcho areas, as well as with the Dene Nation, the NWT Native Women's Association, and the NWT Aboriginal Financial Officers Association. Public sessions were also held in Yellowknife. Ideas and suggestions from these sessions were forwarded to Ottawa for consideration. Summaries were also posted on the Governance website (www.fng-gpn.gc.ca).

Building on the idea of "effective governance", the information that has been gathered nationally will be used to develop legislative options for consideration. The following general subject areas may be included:

1. Legal Standing and Capacity;
2. Leadership selection and Voting Rights; and
3. Accountability to First Nation members.

This legislation is intended to be an interim step in the move towards self-government. It will help all those First Nations who do not yet have self-government agreements in place by creating a system of First Nations governance that will enhance the bands' capacities and allow band councils to be more accountable to their members. Those First Nations who already have a final self-government agreement in place will not be affected by this legislation.

First Nations people, like all Canadians, want open and accountable governments. Minister Nault is fully committed to involving First Nations to the fullest extent possible throughout this process.

Over the next two years, as legislation is put forward and regulations developed, the final phase will give First Nation leaders and members more opportunities to share their views.

In this issue...

Salt River First Nation Votes on Settlement
Moving Forward on the Governance Initiative
Beaufort-Delta Self-Government Agreement Initialed
Profile: Vince Teddy
Did You Know...
Looking Back at the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement
Our Vision
You were Asking...
On the web
Who are you going to call?

Canada

Beaufort-Delta Self-government Agreement Initialed

Self-government is closer to becoming a reality for the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit of the Beaufort-Delta region. Their negotiators, together with the negotiators for the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories, initialed an Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) in Inuvik on October 3, 2001.

The draft AIP is a significant achievement, and unique in its approach. It is the first to include a regional model of government with a public government that will represent both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents in a region. It is also the first time in Canada that two different Aboriginal groups, the Gwich'in and the Inuvialuit, have come together to negotiate one self-government agreement.

Their partnership reflects common goals and geography shared by the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit. For both groups, self-government offers an opportunity to strengthen their cultures and communities, and will provide a stable environment for investment and economic growth.

The draft AIP describes a government model where public and Aboriginal governments will be linked together to coordinate planning and decision-making. It's a model designed to streamline government and improve its efficiency. It will also bring decision-making power closer to Beaufort-Delta residents.

The AIP has 29 chapters, covering areas where Beaufort-Delta governments would share or assume new responsibilities and authorities, such as culture and language, education, income support, health care, and child and family services. Governing structures in the communities, and in the region, would be created or restructured from existing governments to take on new self-governing responsibilities.

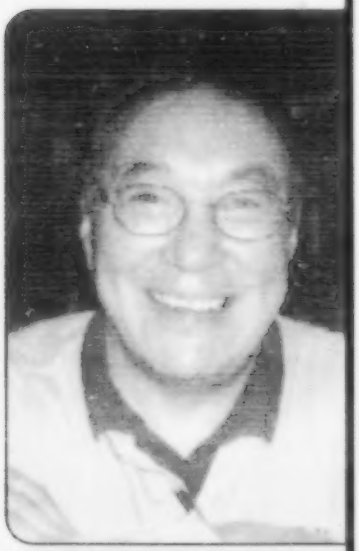
At the initialing stage, much of the hard work has been done. The next step is for each party's leadership to agree with what has been negotiated so far. If all parties approve the AIP, there will be a signing ceremony to celebrate progress. Then negotiators return to the table, for the next stage of negotiations to reach a final agreement.

Initialing the draft Agreement-in-Principle for the Beaufort-Delta region, October 2001, are (left to right): Lawrence Norbert, former Gwich'in negotiator; Vince Teddy, Inuvialuit negotiator; Fred Talen, Chief Territorial Negotiator; Bob Simpson, Chief Gwich'in and Inuvialuit Negotiator; and Daniel Charbonneau, Senior Federal Negotiator. Photos: Gary Vanderhaden/DIAND

Profile

Vince Teddy

Inuvialuit Regional Corporation Negotiator



Vince Teddy sees self-government in the Beaufort-Delta as beneficial to both the Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in.
Photo: Susan Beaumont/DIAND

Negotiator Vince Teddy gets a sense of satisfaction and completeness from negotiating self-government on behalf of the Inuvialuit in the Beaufort-Delta region.

Teddy has been at the negotiating table since Gwich'in and Inuvialuit self-government negotiations began in 1996, and was also involved in the land claim negotiations that lead to the signing of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement in 1984. So taking on the challenge of self-government negotiator was a natural step for him - achieving a self-government agreement would complete the work that began with the settling of the Inuvialuit land claim.

The Inuvialuit land claim, in 1984, was the first comprehensive land claim agreement in the Northwest Territories, and was signed long before self-government was being negotiated in Canada. That agreement did, however, pave the way for today's self-government negotiations by making provisions for the Inuvialuit to be involved in any restructuring of public government in the Beaufort-Delta region, and to be treated no less favourably than other Aboriginal people in the region.

Born in Aklavik, and raised on the DEW Line near Herschel Island, Vince Teddy has strong roots to the land. But like many Gwich'in and Inuvialuit, he was caught between the cultures of two different worlds. After receiving most of his schooling at residential schools in Inuvik and Fort Smith, Teddy returned to Tuktoyaktuk in the mid 1970s where he, his wife Ruth, and their ten children now make their home.

Today, Teddy sees self-government as playing a dramatic role in nurturing the Inuvialuit and Gwich'in cultures and traditions.

"I want our people to have a place where they can go and be served in their own culture and traditions," he says, "And I want them to recognize government as coming from themselves." A desire to see Inuvialuit culture continue, through his children and future generations, keeps him committed to his work.

After the Gwich'in settled their land claim in 1992, the two groups met to discuss self-government and discovered they had much in common. For both the Inuvialuit and the Gwich'in, self-government offers the hope of strengthening their languages and cultures.

The Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) initialed in October describes a public government where the Inuvialuit and Gwich'in would be guaranteed a role in decision-making. It also describes a Gwich'in government and an Inuvialuit government with responsibilities for their respective membership. And it would be a government designed, in part, by the Inuvialuit and Gwich'in themselves.

The Inuvialuit Government described in the draft AIP would provide the Inuvialuit with the opportunity to govern themselves in matters that are at the heart of their societies, identities, cultures and way of life.

"Now that the AIP has been initialed and is close to being signed, self-government is no longer just a vision," says Teddy. He looks forward to workshops where people will be engaged in "building their constitutions right from the ground up, from their own histories".

"Historically, the Inuvialuit had no written records. Their knowledge and traditions were passed on orally from generation to generation. The constitution that is developed for the Inuvialuit government will be the starting point of writing down what was always done traditionally."

Vince Teddy is proud of the unique partnership that exists between the Gwich'in and the Inuvialuit in negotiating one self-government agreement.

"We've taken a bold step to do this together," he says. "Everyone sees the Beaufort-Delta Region as Gwich'in and Inuvialuit people together. This agreement will be of benefit to both groups, without compromising the language and traditions of either."

Vince Teddy is quick to acknowledge the efforts of the other members on his negotiating team. "I'd like to commend our Chief Negotiator, Bob Simpson, and Gwich'in Negotiator, Lawrence Norbert, for their commitment and dedication in these negotiations," he adds.

Did You Know...

It's almost 10 years since the *Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement* was signed. It was signed on April 22, 1992, and came into effect on December 22, 1992.

When the agreement was signed, the Gwich'in, Canada, and the Government of the Northwest Territories prepared a ten-year implementation plan to accompany the agreement. This first implementation plan will expire a year from now, on December 22, 2002.

At the signing ceremony of the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement are (seated from left to right): Willard Hagen, former President of the Gwich'in Tribal Council; Tom Siddon, former Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada; and Nellie Cournoyea, former Premier of the Northwest Territories. Photo: Northern News Services Limited

This implementation plan is important because it ensures that the land claim agreement is carried out. The plan assigns responsibilities to be carried out by the federal and territorial governments, the new management boards created under the *Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement*, and the Gwich'in Tribal Council. It also identifies the level of funding that Canada will provide, and sets out a schedule for the work that needs to be done.

Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Gwich'in recently began an extensive review, and are re-negotiating a new plan for the next implementation period. They hope to have the new plan completed by June 2002.

Looking back at the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement

- The Gwich'in of the Mackenzie Delta Region were the first group to negotiate a regional comprehensive claim agreement in the NWT.
- The Gwich'in own 22,321 square kilometres of land in the NWT, and 1,554 square kilometres of land in the Yukon.
- The Gwich'in have mineral rights to 6,158 kilometres of land.

Q. What does it mean when negotiators "initial" an agreement?

A. Negotiators "initial" an agreement when they are ready to present what they have negotiated to their respective parties for consideration. **A.**

Do you have a question about land or self-government negotiations in the NWT? We'd be happy to provide an answer. Contact us at the address listed below.

On the web

Visit the following for more information:

Government of Canada programs and services:
Government of Canada home page:
www.gc.ca

Plain Talk on the web:
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada site:
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nt/pt/index_e.html

Various claims agreements:
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada site:
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/agr/index_e.html

OUR Vision

The NWT region of DIAND is a respected partner in a strong and healthy Northwest Territories. We strive for:

- respectful, effective relationships with Aboriginal peoples;
- creating and enhancing opportunities for all northerners;
- responsible resource development in healthy ecosystems;
- northern control over northern resources;
- responsive and accountable northern governments as partners; and
- national initiatives that reflect the interests of all Northerners.

Plain Talk is produced to provide general information on topics related to land claims and self-government. It is not a legal document.

We welcome your input!
Please Direct questions or comments to:

Caroline Dennill or Sue Beaumont
DIAND Communications
P.O. Box 1500, Yellowknife, NWT, X1A 2R3
Phone: (867) 669-2576 Fax: (867) 669-2715
e-mail: dennillc@inac.gc.ca or beaumonts@inac.gc.ca

Published under the authority of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Affairs Canada, 2001
http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca

QS-Y137-000-EE-A1
Catalogue No. R72-284/2000E
ISBN 0-662-28568-9

© Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada

Cette publication peut aussi être obtenue en français sous le titre: ***Franc parler.***

Plain Talk on Land and Self-government is produced by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in the NWT, to help northerners understand these concepts, how they work, and what they mean in our day-to-day lives.